



THE COCHRANE
COLLABORATION®

Individual Participant Data Meta-analysis

Methods Group

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INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANT DATA META-ANALYSIS

METHODS GROUP

The Individual Participant Data (IPD) Meta-analysis Methods Group has more than 80 members from nearly 20 countries. Their interests span prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation in a wide range of health care settings, including cancer, epilepsy, stroke, perinatal care and malaria. With this diversity in mind, we have recently changed the name of the Group, replacing “patient” with “participant” to become the “Individual Participant Data” Meta-analysis Methods Group, helpfully retaining the “IPD” abbreviation.

WHAT IS AN IPD META-ANALYSIS?

Individual participant data (IPD) meta-analysis is a specific type of systematic review. Rather than extracting data from study publications, the original research data are sought directly from the researchers responsible for each study. These data can then be re-analysed centrally and combined, if appropriate, in meta-analyses.

IPD reviews usually require dedicated staff and would be difficult to do in ‘free time’. The approach requires particular skills and usually takes longer and costs more than a conventional systematic review of summary data. However, IPD reviews offer benefits particularly related to the improving quality of data and the type of analyses that can be done. For these reasons they are considered to be the ‘gold standard’ of systematic review. In fact, IPD reviews have produced definitive answers to clinical questions, which might not have been obtained by standard systematic review methodology.

THE ROLE OF THE METHODS GROUP

The Methods Group comprises individuals who are involved or interested in the conduct of systematic reviews that include IPD. Our role is to help Cochrane Collaboration reviewers decide whether it would be appropriate for their systematic review to be conducted using individual participant data and, if so, to offer advice on how to do so.

Our activities are based around the following 3 core functions:

- Providing policy advice via the Methods Group convenors
- Serving as a forum for discussion
- Ensuring the Group functions interactively with the Cochrane Collaboration

We have also adopted the following 5 elective core functions:

- Providing training and support
- Providing peer review (on IPD elements of Cochrane reviews)
- Providing specialist advice (on IPD)
- Conducting Cochrane methodology reviews (relevant to IPD topics)
- Contributing to the Cochrane Methodology Register

Cochrane authors are encouraged to contact the convenors for advice on specific aspects of IPD reviews, ideally through their appropriate CRG liaison. Where possible, advice will be based on empirical evidence from research conducted by Group members or others. We are willing to help with specific Cochrane reviews and the convenors can bring appropriate authors and methodologists into direct contact should the need arise.



JOINING THE GROUP



Prospective members have the choice of being involved as either an active or a passive member.

We would like **Active members** to:

- Make sure they let us know about all new IPD reviews and methods projects.
- Ensure that all their existing projects are kept up to date.

And, if possible and appropriate:

- Assist us in answering queries and providing specialist IPD advice
- Assist us with providing peer review on IPD elements of Cochrane reviews
- Direct potential new members to us and attend meetings of the Group.

Passive members do not need to participate as above but will receive information that we circulate regarding the Collaboration's activities.

The type of membership is flexible and members will have the opportunity to change to whichever option suits them best.

If you are interested in joining the Group, then please contact us (IPD@ctu.mrc.ac.uk) or fill out the online membership form on our website

www.ipdmamg.cochrane.org